

South Precinct Email Community Newsletter
December 13, 2007



Dear Community Friends:

Crime Prevention During The Holidays

During the holiday season, we often see a spike in certain crime types. For example, neighbors have reported that they have had packages (gifts for others) delivered to their home only to find that the packages were stolen off the porch. Others have had items stolen from their cars. While car prowling is nothing new, it does seem to escalate when there are packages clearly visible in the car.

This extended newsletter focuses on safety and security during the holiday season. These recommendations will hopefully reduce your risk of being a crime victim during this time of year.

Prevention Tips While Shopping

- Take a friend along when doing holiday shopping. Using the buddy system reduces your chances of being a victim of robbery.
- When paying by cash, only take out the amount needed and keep the remainder out of view. It's always a good idea to carry minimal amounts of cash, regardless of the time of year.
- Don't tempt a thief by leaving your purse, wallet or packages unattended. It only takes a second to grab them.
- Beware of strangers who bump, shove or get too close. Pickpockets may use these diversions to lift your wallet.
- Be cautious of those you don't know who offer to carry bags and packages for you. Depending on where you shop, store personnel or mall security may offer assistance in carrying packages to your car or escorting you to your vehicle.
- If you have to return to your car to store purchases, place them in the trunk out of sight. Do this when you get to your car, rather than waiting until you park at your next stop. Gifts and other valuables should never be left in clear view.
- Before returning to your car, make sure you're not over-burdened with packages. Have your car keys in hand to avoid "searching" for them when you reach your car.

When Using an ATM

- Only take out the amount you need, rather than the maximum you can get.
- Don't walk away from the cash machine counting your money. That's an invitation to someone who may not have the best of intentions in mind.
- Beware of strangers hanging around the ATM. Wait until they leave, or consider using an alternate cash machine. You should report suspicious people to bank personnel, mall security and/or police.
- Secure your money and your bankcard or credit card back in your wallet or pocket before leaving the ATM.
- Always keep your PIN number separate from your bank and/or credit card.

Prevention Tips At Home

- Don't openly display your Christmas tree and gifts in the front window so it's easily visible from the street. You increase the possibility that a burglar will be tempted to gain entry and steal the gifts.
- When disposing of the packaging in which gifts and other purchases come, realize that when you place these out for recycling or trash collection, those boxes sitting out on the curb on collection day give a passer-by a pretty good indication of what's in your home. Recycle the packaging, yes - but break the boxes down first, put them inside out so the exterior writing does not show, and don't put them on the curb until collection day.
- If you have ordered items and are going to have them delivered, consider having them delivered to your place of business rather than your home. This reduces the opportunity for packages to be left unattended on your porch and therefore an enticing target for thieves.

- Burglars often enter through unlocked doors or windows. When exterior Christmas light extension cords are run inside through a window, this prevents the window from being secured, and this unsecured window is visibly noticeable. Consider installing an inexpensive exterior outlet for your holiday lights so you don't provide an opened and unlocked entry to your home.

Traveling Away For The Holidays

- Let your trusted neighbors know that you plan to be out town so that they can watch your home for you. If they see suspicious activity while you are gone, they will know to call 911 for you.
- Have the Post Office hold your mail.
- Don't leave descriptive telephone answering machine messages, such as; "You've reached the Wilson's. We're away skiing for the holidays and won't be back until...." Strangers don't need to know your schedule or that your home is going to be unoccupied for an extended length of time. Bad guys love to hear that they have plenty of time to break in and ransack your home.

Holiday Parties

- If you will be hosting a party, establish a guest list and greet your guests at the door. Be careful when opening your home to "uninvited guests."
- Balance the desire to want to show off your valuables and treasures with security consciousness. Put easily portable valuable items out of sight. This will reduce the threat that they may be stolen. Also, with those items stored away, your guests won't inadvertently mention the priceless items they have seen to others.
- If you are going to be serving liquor, do it responsibly! Have a good selection of non-alcoholic beverages to offer. Serve coffee, tea and water as the party winds down. No one really needs "One for the Road."
- If a friend has had too much to drink, insist on making other arrangements for getting them home safely, or offer to let them stay overnight. Remember: Drunk Drivers are dangerous to themselves and others.
- **Do Not Drink And Drive Yourself!**
If you attend a Holiday Party and over indulged, take a cab, have someone give you a ride home, ensure you have a designated driver, or impose upon your hosts to let you stay there and rest a while. Better for you to crash on their couch than into someone else.

A Word On Charities

- Be cautious of those going door-to-door collecting for charities. Ask to see an ID that identifies them with that charity. Never give cash. Please report suspicious people. If your instincts tell you "something is not right," it probably isn't. Call 911 or our non-emergency number (206) 625-5011 to report the incident.

We wish you a happy and joyous Holiday Season. Peace, prosperity and good health to you and yours this Season and in the coming New Year.

Take Care and Stay Safe!

Mark Solomon, SPD South Precinct Crime Prevention